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ABSTRACT

The criterion of topicality must be met by all advocates of academic debate policy in order to achieve effective and organized argument. The plan upon which each individual debate round is built must first satisfy the requirements imposed by the resolution. The policy proposal should answer the question of whether the affirmative plan, as a whole, sufficiently constitutes an example of the proposition. If the wording of the topic is exemplified by the plan presented by the affirmative advocate, then the plan may be said to be topical. However, misconception by debaters has often led to the prostitution and violation of topicality argumentation. If the use of topicality is to become more carefully exhibited and the abuse of such arguments limited, then equitable methods of determining resolutionality must be developed. The affirmative has the prerogative to define the resolution, provided that it is defined in a reasonable way. Regardless of the method used for this definition, the affirmative will probably be considered topical if the mode of definition and resultant information are reasonable. Reasonability is the fundamental basis for evaluating the debate round; a properly applied reasonability standard allows equity and mutual fairness. (HOD)

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TOPICALITY ARGUMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY DEBATE: AN EXAMINATION AND CRITIQUE OF STANDARDS

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Participants in academic debate must wrestle with an issue unique to their environment, the issue of topicality. This paper discusses standards which may be used by debaters and judges to address this issue.

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Makers of policy are usually granted a degree of intuitive freedom. The plans they propose and the courses of action that they suggest are limited only by the needs of the constituency and the political fortitude with which the ideas are presented. If a policy appears to have intrinsic benefits, is acceptable to a large spectrum of the population, and can be adopted with relatively few disadvantageous effects, it will most likely be adopted. The planners who shape the direction and future of a society are free to propose and implement policy systems with little constraint. Acceptance is the only prerequisite to the implementation of a particular proposal. At a deeper legislative level, the policymaker may be required to demonstrate a need for his proposal. He might also need to explain why new policy action is necessary to alleviate the harms that the plan would solve or to gain the benefits that

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the plan would accrue. The workability of the proposal would also need to be demonstrated before widespread acceptance can be gathered. Like academic debate policy strategists, professional policymakers must prove the need and show causality of the need, as well as solvency for the need. Additionally, however, debaters must deal with an issue unique to the argumentation environment: The criterion of topicality must be met by all advocates of academic debate policy. Even the Supreme Court and its associate courts, the only jurisdictional framework within the federal policy making system, is liberated from this requirement. While the Supreme Court is allowed to decide if it has jurisdiction over a certain question of law or policy, the affirmatives of debate academia are required to meet resolutional standards set by an educational decision-making body. In order for effective and organized argument, the affirmative and negative must be discussing the same subject. Hence, both participants must agree in advance on the topic to be debated. Anticipation of potential examples of the mutual resolution allows equitable preparation by the negative opponent of policy change. Unlike the Congress, which changes the topic of discussion as often as the weather changes in Oklahoma, or the President, who chooses what proposal to introduce and the Congressman who will introduce it, or even the Supreme Court, which decides which cases it will adjudicate, the affirmative debate team must adhere to guidelines which will allow educational debate on the part of all those involved in the agrumentation process. Those guidelines, often and most usually set in the form of a resolution, represent the proverbial albatross that burdens the policymaking mariner. However, since all debaters are interested in equity and most debaters must argue the relative disadvantages of the affirmative policy at least as often as they argue the relative

advantages, the need for and fairness of a uniform debate resolution is seldom disputed. Unfortunately, affirmative and negative teams within any particular round do not always agree on what proposals may be considered topical and what proposals fall beyond the realm of the resolution. The differing standards implemented by debate theorists and judges seems to be of little help to the novice debater still trying to get a solid grip on the term "prima facie." Instead, theorists have apparently adopted the maxim set forth by President Harry S. Truman, "If you can't convince them, confuse them." In view of this, all of academia must acknowledge that an understanding of the uses, abuses, and implications of the topicality challenge as perpetrated by the negative and fought by the affirmative is essential if a fair method of resolutionality argumentation is to be developed.

J. W. Patterson and David Zarefsky (1983) claim in their debate textbook Contemporary Debate that "topicality is the most basic requirement that [the affirmative] must satisfy" (p. 112). Since topicality seems to be a prerequisite to argumentation, its position is one of prominence. The process participants must agree upon the topic which they will argue before that process can begin. As mentioned earlier, most academic debaters have the topic which they will argue thrust upon them by an unseen entity that has reviewed potential areas of discussion and shuttled one of those areas to schools nationwide so that a select few participants can gather the following summer and discuss the topic for a final time. The plan upon which each individual debate round is built must first satisfy the requirements imposed by the resolution. The policy proposal should answer "the question of whether the affirmative plan, as a whole, sufficiently constitutes an example of the proposition" (Wavada, 1979, p. 1).

If the wording of the topic is exemplified by the plan presented by the affirmative advocate, then the plan may be said to be topical. The intent of the affirmative argumentation should be to support the resolution. If the affirmative is resolutionally tangential, then the proposal would not be within the realm of discussion as determined by the central wording committee. David A. Thomas (1975) defines "topicality" as "The state of conformity to the intent of the debate resolution" (p. 353). While determining the intent of a given resolution may not be a task easily accomplished, that determination is essential to the continuance of debate. The purpose of the resolution is to specify, in general terms, the topic to be discussed. The realm of potential affirmative arguments is separated from the realm of potential negative arguments in a succinct sentence. The determination of territory is reliant upon the argumentation skills of each debater called upon to challenge or defend a topicality claim. "In dividing the universe of arguments, the resolution determines which side has jurisdiction over any potential argument" (Patterson & Zarefsky, 1983, p. 111). If the affirmative can be said to have invaded negative territory, then the affirmative team becomes uniquely negative, both an adovcate and an opponent of the resolution. For this reason, the policy proposed by the affirmative must be considered well within the righteousness of the resolution. If the imaginary line dividing affirmative and negative land is crossed, then the negative team is allowed to take prisoners. Obviously, would-be affirmative commandoes are much wiser to settle on home territory. If the affirmative position does, however, violate the territorial integrity of the negative, then the issue of topicality becomes a voting issue of the absolute nature. If the realm of argumentation is not resolutional as provided by the affirmative, then the

primary duty of the policy proponent has not been met. The negative "prisoner" may have a humble fall at the hands of a competent critic. A non-resolution affirmative may not represent the accepted area of discussion if it does not meet the terms of the resolution. Since the appropriate topic is not being discussed because of affirmative inadequacy, fairness dictates that the affirmative must lose the debate on the grounds of topicality. Unlike the other issues on which the outcome of a debate may be based, topicality is not a percentage issue. As Professor Parson (1981) of Kansas University notes, "While medical science and test tube babies may destroy the analogy that one cannot be a little pregnant or a little bit topical, the basic judgment still remains an either/or. In fact, this may be the only issue left in debate calling for a dichotomous judgment" (p. 2). Since "if the affirmative were to lose topicality, it would lose the debate" (Patterson & Zarefsky, 1983, p. 112), the issue of topicality has become of supreme importance in most debaters' repertoire of arguments. The question of topicality is not, however, a prime issue argument. The argument is presented in a more theoretical format than other issues in the debate. Rather than being challenged on the issues implied by the resolution, the affirmative is being challenged on the resolution itself. Topicality is less an issue of argument and more an issue of rules. That issue of debate standards must be resolved before the debaters can consider the substantitive issues implied by the topic. Donn Parson (1981) relates topicality to the decision of jurisdiction made in the judicial system: "The basic procedural question, does the court have standing in this case, becomes the basis for topicality" (p. 2). At that level, the critic in a particular debate round must decide whether or not the affirmative case is within his jurisdiction

before he can consider the merits of the positions taken in the round. Topicality, in its simplest state, is a fundamental issue on which the entire round must be based. If the resolution is not the foremost issue dealt with, then the participants in the round may not be discussing the same area of discussion. Ehninger and Brockreide (1978) write that the resolution "functions to constrain the number of possible areas of controversy and to create a common frame of reference among debaters and judges" (p. 196). If the affirmative presentation fails to fall within the general guidelines implied by the topic, then no guarantee that a "frame of reference" will be established exists. Secure in its position as a prerequisite to argument and an absolute voting issue, topicality has become a much-exalted banner with which affirmative teams must deal and negative teams often choose to herald. Misconception by debaters has often led to the prostitution and violation of topicality argumentation. Its position at the beginning of first negative constructive is often a vital component of that first negative speech in every round against every case, topical or not. "Since topicality is such an important consideration and since it is seldom a clear-cut case but instead is settled by evaluating the competing arguments, it is not surprising that negative teams frequently raise the challenge" (Patterson & Zarefsky, 1983, p. 112). In spite of, or rather because of, the importance of topicality as a prerequisite to argument, topicality challenges should not be used as a weapon against the affirmative team. Negative teams should refrain from using topicality as a weapon against clearly resolutional affirmatives just as affirmative teams should not employ nonresolutional or near-nonresolutional "surprise attacks" against negatives. Such strategies are neither effective nor ethical. If the purpose of debate is truly educational, then arguments

which detract from that learning value should be avoided by conscientious participants. Likewise, acceptable standards should exist to determine the necessity for topicality arguments. Much as a negative team would not argue inherency against an obviously inherent case, the negative should use caution when considering topicality challenges against cases that are clearly resolutional. Additionally, standards must be devised which would discourage affirmatives from abusing the privilege of case choice given to them. A sincere interest on the part of both sides in maintaining professional integrity must be prevalent if such standards are to be developed.

If the utilization of topicality is to become more carefully exhibited and the abuse of such arguments limited, then equitable methods of determination of resolutionality must be developed. The working of topics often makes the abuse of the resolution quite tempting at worst, and at least, difficult for well-meaning debaters to interpret. Patterson and Zarefsky (1983) proclaim that a "far more common peril for the affirmative arises from ambiguous wording in the resolution itself" (p. 112). Collegiate CEDA debate originated from Dr. Jack Howe's perception that some topics carried so many meanings that they "literally invited the squirrels to come down from the trees" (Kelly, 1981, p. 8-9). While abandonment of high school cross-examination debate or collegiate NDT debate is one answer to resolutionality problems, the establishment of equitable standards is probably a far more desirable method of resolution revolution.

The affirmative team usually has presumption of topicality. Awareness of the topic area would infer that the topic area will enjoy adherence. Gossett (1981) writes that "The affirmative has presumption on topicality. Therefore, the negative must win the topicality agrument,

not just place doubt in my mind, to win the round on that single issue." If the negative team believes that it can sincerely and seriously challenge the topical nature of an affirmative proposal, then it is incumbent upon the negative to prove that the affirmative has not been fair in its interpretation of the topic. Just because the negative does not view the resolution on identical grounds as the affirmative does not constitute a negative decision. A variety of definitional interpretations are available and a variety of definitional interpretations will most assuredly be used. Austin J. Freely (1971) asserts "it is the privilege of the affirmative to stipulate which legitimate definition of terms it will use, and the negative must debate on the basis of the definition elected by the affirmative" (p. 49). Therefore, the criterion for definitional decision is appropriately made by the affirmative. Using Freeley's standard, the affirmative may put into action its topicality presumption by presenting definitions in the first affirmative constructive speech. In these times of ten minute speeches condensed into eight minutes of allowed speaking time, fewer teams are willing to commit the seconds necessary to explain terms in the first affirmative's case. Because debaters are not as willing to present resolutional perspectives at the beginning of the debate, many negative teams perceive an opportunity to present the terms on which resolutionality will be decided and will often represent those terms as the only terms allowable in the discussion. The affirmative, however, actually retains the primary responsibiltiy and right to define topicality terms and standards. That right is not necessarily discarded by the affirmative's decision to delay definition. Patterson and Zarefsky (1983) qualify the affirmative privilege: "The affirmative has the prerogative to define the resolution, provided that it is defined in a reasonable way" (p. 124). Whether the affirmative

analysis is presented as an establishment of topicality in anticipation of dispute or structured as an answer to negative challenges, the nature of topicality grants presumption to the affirmative on the issue of resolutionality. Conversely, it is not only the affirmative's right to interpret the topic, but it is also a weighty burden placed upon them. If the affirmative is going to maintain presumption of resolutional innocence, then the affirmative must be able to defend its position against stalworthy opponents. Many topical affirmatives have been declared nonresolutional because their defense was not well-prepared. Ehninger and Brockreide (1978) note that "incumbent on the affirmative is the burden of proving that their proposed change constitutes adoption of the specific proposal being debated" (p. 196). After careful consideration of the implications of a topic, the development of a case constituting the meaning and intent of the topic should not be difficult for a well-intentioned and well-thinking affirmative proponent. As potential affirmative case areas evolve, the debater would be wise to consider the application of both accepted and unorthodox topicality decision rules, in order to insure that the case in question meets a reasonable spectrum of the implications intended by the wording of the resolution being debated.

Foremost in consideration should be the methods used by debate critics in the judgment of topicality. Debaters have traditionally employed devices, both commonplace and radical, in order to prove a proposal topical. A discussion and understanding of each of these methods is essential to the development of equitable standards as criteria for resolutionality determination. Operational objectives are often set at the outset of a round by affirmative teams which promise to "operationally define the terms of the resolution." In other words, the affirmative

will represent the intent of the resolution through presenting an example of the resolution in the form of the affirmative case. The resolution is being defined as the action taken by this affirmative team. David Thomas (1975) argues that if the plan implements the basic terms of the topic, then it can be considered operationally resolutional. He says, "An affirmative plan is topical when it implements the resolution fully, to the extent implied by each of its operative terms" (p. 92). According to Thomas, the resolution can be "defined" by a set of actions. If those actions can claim the result of implementing the terms of the resolution, then the plan can be considered topical. It is possible that a resolution may actually require operational consideration as a basis for topicality. Ehninger and Brockreide (1978) explain that "some terms are defined well only by describing how they operate or function" (p. 158). If a judge can understand the topic's implementation procedures, then he can perspectively determine the intent.

Contextual considerations also become very important when a determination of resolutionality must be made. Austin Freeley (1981) says that "words or terms in the proposition must be defined within the content of the resolution" (p. 41). The practical application of the topic's wording must be manifested by the affirmative team as the literary and literal intent of the topic. Defining and building examples of the resolution in accordance with each individual word would be impractical and cumbersome. Phrases often have different meanings than the separate words that make up the phrase. Within the context of the resolution, the meaning of the topic on a practical, legislative level can be determined. Patterson and Zarefsky (1983) insist that "the only way to determine whether an interpretation of the resolution is reasonable is by referring to context" (p. 124). If the example of the resolution presented by the affirmative

seems to be a fair assessment of the broad meaning of the topic at face value then it is probably contextually acceptable. On a more competitive level, Unger (1981) suggests that "Definitional superiority would be accorded any approach which placed the words of the proposition in their most relevant and appropriate context" (p. 7). Accepting the resolution as a single sentence with implications capable of filling several libraries and even more fileboxes is a necessary approach toward building a contextual understanding of the topic's demands and allowances. A topic that is not contextually truly an exemplification of the affirmative case cannot be operationally represented by that affirmative. The approach suggested implies that the resolution should be a general representation of the case and the case should be a specific representation of the resolution. As with most areas of argumentation, there is likely to be disagreement as to what a fair interpretation of the contextual meaning of a resolution would be. "No single 'correct' definition of a complex term is appropriate in every context" (Ehninger & Brockreide, 1978, p. 156). Therefore, the affirmative and negative must delineate the proper placing of the contextual term. The Forensic Quarterly (1982) states "almost any definition is reasonable to someone in some context" (p. 47). However, if that contextual interpretation is so unusual that it is shared by few others, the affirmative team is not going to find ease in convincing the judge in the round that the definition is reasonable. In the end, debaters must analyze the simplistic and sophisticated meanings of the resolution and develop cases around that analysis. Any sentence, whether in a Mother Goose fairy tale, a Shakespearean play, or a judicial presentation, is going to have a degree of acceptable meaning. Debaters, understanding that "the resolution was composed by a committee, each of whom may have had separate

interpretations of meanings" (Parson, 1981, p. 6), should strive to understand all possible implications of the topic.

Rational Reasonability

Regardless of the method used by an affirmative to defend the resolutionality of its position, that affirmative will probably be considered topical if the mode of definition and resultant information is "reasonable." The requirement of reasonability has become of prime significance in the determination of equity in acceptance of case areas. "The determinant of whether the affirmative definitions of terms are legitimate and acceptable is the reasonableness of the definitions" (Campbell, 1974, p. 113). Without a reasonable appraisal of allowable argumentation, the establishment of boundaries would be very near impossible. By implementing a requirement that definitions and interpretations be reasonable, the realm of the resolution is significantly limited. On the other hand, the potential for a variety of argumentation bases is insured since there are no pre-set ideas of discussion. The reasonability standard allows creativity and invention within reasonable limits. As Lichtman, Rohrer, and Corsi (1979) note, "Since most debate resolutions can be defined in various ways, the affirmative definition need only be a reasonable one" (p. 86). The academic acceptance of the reasonability standard may be a sign of its wholesale usefulness in determining a cosmic idealism. The standard has become, in itself, the object of much debate. However, it still stands as the most accepted, least objected standard for determining topical equity. Herbeck (1981) notes that "Most debaters and judges work from the assumption that if the affirmative offers definitions that are reasonable, then the affirmative case is topical" (p. 1). Yet, the development of a definition's "reasonable application" could be

one of the most difficult challenges faced by the participants of the debate round. A rational recognition of the meaning of the adjective "reasonable" is necessary if the term is going to have any usefulness in academic debate. To assert the reasonableness of a specific standard is not limiting enough, while strict standards could make the term meaningless. Patterson and Zarefsky (1983) say that "Generally, an inference is reasonable if it would be made by most people when exercising their critical judgment" (p. 43). However, it is not practical to conduct a survey to determine the topicality of every case on the topic. Even if it were, uncommon but fair interpretations would lose their allowability. Unfortunately, there is no democratic standard that can be applied to the determination of reasonability. Thus, the standard, even though it is widely accepted, relies on unstable foundations for its applicability. If the standard is to be respected, its application should be reviewed. The term "reasonable" must be given a fair but limiting meaning. That meaning must allow Patterson and Zarefsky (1983) to be considered in their "critical judgment" (p. 43). The interpretation of the standard must have within its allowance a recognition of the need for the standard but also an admission of the inadequacies of the standard. The reasonability standard is undoubtedly the object of much criticism. "The reasonability standard, according to the critics, is far too subjective, generally too vague, and not sufficiently limiting" (Herbeck, 1983, p. 3). Admittedly, the standard is subjective in that it allows a wide spectrum of interpretations to fall within its jurisdiction. However, that subjectivity itself is subject to a standard of reasonability. The standard is also quite vague, without a guideline of regulations that apply to reasonability decisions. Whether or not the standard is limiting enough should be left to the individuals

conducting the debate. Their own capabilities should be the determining factor as to the limits of the topic. Rather than devise decision-rules on the basis of reasonability, those decision-rules could be more easily based on the lack of reasonability in a definiiton. Parson (1981) states that "a proposition so broad that its function is lost or so defined that it prevents negative teams from preparing against innumerable cases is unreasonable" (p. 10). Therefore, if the definition is so limiting that preparation is too simple or so broad that preparation can be considered impossible, then the definition is not reasonable.

Perhaps the most meaningful and applicable definition of the term "reasonable" is that which defines the state of reasonabiltiy as "not excessive or extreme; fair; moderate" (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 1982, p. 1086). With that interpretation of the term as a basis, affirmative teams can easily claim that their positions are fair; no unreasonable demands are being made upon the negative team, especially since the same first negative who initiated the topicality challenge will probably prove that the negative team is adequately prepared for the subject area in question as he proceeds to argue specific attacks on affirmative case-side structure. Thus, the affirmative is not invoking excessive or extreme demands upon the negative team. As long as the affirmative team is not maliciously abusing the topic, then such a standard is fair to all participants. The effects of limiting the topic severely are quite unsettling. For example, high school debaters argued that the United States should significantly curtail its arm sales to other countries during the 1982-83 academic year. The plethora of cases available to affirmative teams was admittedly wide, requiring intense yet comprehensive preparation by negative teams. Some negative teams, however, elected to definitionally demand that the curtailment of

arms be truly significant, citing a government statistic that placed "significant" as five percent of the total entity or more. Based on that definition, only six subject areas would have been available to proponents of the resolution. While negative teams were properly arguing that a significant amount must be curtailed, affirmative teams were properly answering that the negative standard limited the scope of the topic's intentions and was thus unfair. Herbeck (1981) defends broad topics and the interpretation of topics as broad when he writes "Such topics encourage the affirmative to investigate the entire problem area. Furthermore, broad topics prevent stagnation. If debate was held on the same few cases round after round, all participants would lose interest. Debate would degenerate into mindless and repetitive brief reading contests" (p. 11). Therefore, it would seem that a broad interpretation is not only desirable, it is necessary if academic debate is to serve its proper purpose. Admittedly, requesting such a delimited version of the resolution calls for an open mind and an always-open library. It also might be important to remember that some people are so open-minded that their brains leak out (Taylor, 1982). However, conscientious efforts to arrive at a fair interpretation of the topic can be made without the prostitution of common sense. The debate community would do well to adopt the standard of reasonability adopted by most other decision-making disciplines. If a proposal is reasonable, it is likely to be so placed. As Herbeck (1981) notes, "reasonability is a very common standard of proof in a wide variety of constructs outside of academic debate" (p. 1). Therefore, the usefulness and acceptance of the reasonability standard is truly indigenous to the decision-making process.

Reasonability is the fundamental basis for evaluating the debate

round itself. If the affirmative case is reasonably well-defended, then the affirmative team will probably win the round. Herbeck (1981) claims another application of debate reasonability when he writes, "Furthermore, reasonability plays a vital role in evaluating every other issue in a debate. Whenever a debater or judge attempts to grapple with or solve a contested issue they are using a reasonability standard" (p. 6). Thus, the continuity of the decision-making process in itself justifies using the standard for the evaluation of topicality. Most importantly, the realization that more than one interpretation of the topic can be considered reasonable is vital to a complete understanding of the standard. Freeley (1971) notes that "the terms of many debate propositions are subject to more than one reasonable and legitimate definition" (p. 48). At that level, the negative and affirmative teams could each offer opposing but reasonable interpretations. It is not necessary that the affirmative prove degrees of reasonability to win the argument. Patterson and Zarefsky (1983) appropriately state that "the fact that the negative may offer an alternative defintion is unreasonable" (p. 119). On the contrary, such a circumstance merely indicates that automation, computer science, and Big Brother have all failed in their attempts to destroy diversity. Lichtman, Rohrer, and Corsi (1979) further contend that the affirmative definition "need not be the only reasonable definition or even the definition that most readily springs to mind when scanning a proposition" (p. 86). Thus, judges are clearly justified in acknowledging the reasonability of both definitions as long as that judge realizes that the affirmative interpretation need not be most reasonable, just reasonable. Fortunately, such a standard allows less complicated debating for the judge and the debaters. For the judge, the standard allows a following of the path of least resistance. As Parson (1981) notes,

"With affirmative responses that seem, or feel, reasonable, it is easier to ignore the issue and resolve the debate on substantitive issues" (p. 3). Debaters would be wise to seek shelter in Parson's scoundrel's refuge. A properly-applied reasonability standard allows equity and mutual fairness.

Mr. Unger's Neighborhood

In opposition to the reasonability standard, an alternate standard rose on the horizon, suggesting that there is only one acceptable interpretation of the topic, and that judges should vote for the most reasonable definition in the round. Patterson and Zarefsky (1983) state "More recently, the practice has been to label as reasonable only the better definition advanced in the debate" (p. 114). Such a standard would deny the aforementioned allowance of two reasonable definitions and the supposition that the affirmative need not be more reasonable, just reasonable. Unger (1981) defends his standard by claiming that the best definition "is a comparative assessment which requires both teams to discover the superiority of one of their definitions through a process of comparison and contrast" (pp. 7-8). However, Unger is assuming that unrestricted topicality arguments are desirable. As previously mentioned, the abuse of topicality agrumentation is disastrous. Herbeck (1981, p. 9) explains the boredom that often arises as a result of the discussion of rules. He also states "excessive debate about the rules of debate detracts from the activity." Perhaps Unger would rather see a panel discussion on the possible interpretations of a topic rather than the actual debate of resolutional issues afforded by traditional debate. Unger (1981) further argues that "By requiring definitions to approximate the 'best' definition standard rather than the one which was merely 'reasonable,' the

range of possible affirmative cases would be restricted" (p. 8). Initially, Unger fails to justify a limited topic interpretation. As Herbeck, Parson, and others have noted in previous sections, restricted discussion is neither wise nor educational. Secondly, Unger ignores the fact that no single definition can be considered "best." If a plan of action properly results in the mandates of the resolution, then that plan should be considered adequately resolutional. The purpose of topicality agrumentation is to insure fairness unequivocally. Topicality is a rules challenge, not a rhetoric contest, and should be argued as such.

Conclusion

Topicality argumentation has its place in academic debate. Unfortunately, that place has not been determined. As with sexual endeavors, political extremists, and high school coaches-turned-administrators, the placement of topicality is subject to pertinent attitudes and positions. Advocates of free sex propose that we do "whatever feels good." Political extremists tend to drift fr. n ideology to ideology, each one at least twenty years behind or ahead f its time. High school coaches-turned-administrators are called upon to resolve issues which they are unqualified to act upon. In the end, we may see that topicality is a volatile issue requiring none of these approaches, all of these approaches, or a mixture thereof. Perhaps the adoption of traditional standards such as reasonability, plus the open-minded equity, and finally the intelligent ignorance displayed by each of those mentioned above is essential to the development of a fair standard. In order to determine resolutionality, we must understand rationality of its purpose, the reasonability of its interpretations, and the responsibility with which it is argued.

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